

destreyneth a man to accepte benygnyly every peyne that hym is enioyned, with contricioun; & in werkyng of allemanere humylitee. And this is fruytful penitence agayn thre thynges in whiche we wratthe oure Lord Ihesu Crist: this is to seyn, by delit in thynkyng, by recchelesnesse in spekyng, & by wikked synful werkyng. And agayns these wikkede gyltes is penitence, that may be likned unto a tree.

THE roote of this tree is contricioun, that hideth hym in the herte of hym that is verray repentaunt, right as the roote of a treethideth hym in the erthe. Of the roote of contricioun spryngeth a stalke, that bereth branches and leues of confessioun, & fruyt of satisfaccioun. for which Crist seith in his gospel. Dooth digne fruyt of penitence. for by this fruyt may men knowe this tree, and nat by the roote that is hyd in the herte of man, ne by the branches, ne by the leues of confessioun. And therfore oure Lord Ihesu Crist seith thus. By the fruyt of hem ye shul knowen hem. Of this roote eek spryngeth a seed of grace, the which seed is mooder of sikernes, and this seed is egre and hoot. The grace of this seed spryngeth of God, thurgh remembrance of the day of doome and on the peynes of helle. Of this matere seith Salomon, that. In the drede of God man forgeteth his synne. The heete of this seed is the love of God, & the desiring of the joye perdurable. This herte draweth the herte of a man to God, and dooth hym haten his synne. for soothly, ther is nothyng that savoureth so wel to a child as the milk of his norice, ne nothyng is to hym moore abhominable than thilke milk whan it is medled with oother mete. Right so the synful man that loveth his synne, hym semeth that it is to him moost sweete of anythyng; but fro that tyme that he loveth sadly oure Lord Ihesu Crist, and desireth the lif perdurable, ther nys to hym nothyng moore abhominable. for soothly, the lawe of God is the love of God; for which David the prophete seith: I have loved thy lawe and hated wikkednesse and hate; he that loveth God kepeth his lawe and his word. This tree saugh the prophete Daniel in spirit, upon the avysoun of the kyng Nabugodonosor, whan he conseiled hym to do penitence. Penance is the tree of lyf to hem that it receyven, & he that holdeth hym in verray penitence is blessed; after the sentence of Salomon.

IN this penitence or contricioun man shal understonde foure thynges; that is to seyn, what is contricioun: and whiche been the causes that moeven a

man to contricioun: and how he sholde be contrit: and what contricioun availleth to the soule. Thanne is it thus: that contricioun is the verray sorwe that a man receyveth in his herte for his synnes, with sad purpos to shryve hym, and to do penance, and nevermoore to do synne. And this sorwe shal been in this manere, as seith Seint Bernard. It shal been hevyn and grevous, and ful sharpe and poynant in herte. first, for man hath agilt his Lord and his Creatour; and moore sharpe and poynant, for he hath agilt his fader celestial; and yet moore sharpe & poynant, for he hath wrathed and agilt hym that boghte hym; which with his precious blood hath delivered us fro the bondes of synne, and fro the crueltee of the devel, and fro the peynes of helle.

THE causes that oghte moeve a man to contricioun been sex. first, a man shal remembre hym of his synnes; but looke he that thilke remembrance ne be to hym no delit by no way, but greet shame and sorwe for his gilt. for Job seith: Synful men doon werthes worthy of confessioun. And therfore seith Ezechiel: I wol remembre me alle the yeres of my lyf, in bitternesse of myn herte. And God seith in the Apocalips: Remembreth yow fro whennes that ye been falle for biforn that tyme that ye synned ye were the children of God, and lymes of the regne of God; but for youre synne ye been woxen thral and foul, and membres of the feend, hate of aungels, sclandre of holy chirche, and foode of the false serpent; perpetuel matere of the fir of helle. And yet moore foul and abhominable, for ye trespassen so ofte tyme, as dooth the hound that retourneth to eten his spewyng. And yet be ye fouler for youre longe continuyng in synne & youre synful usage, for which ye be roten in your synne, as a beest in his dong. Swiche manere of thoghtes maken a man to have shame of his synne, and no delit, as God seith by the prophete Ezechiel: Ye shal remembre yow of youre weyes, & they shul displese yow. Soothly, synnes been the weyes that leden folk to helle.

THE seconde cause that oghte make a man to have desdayn of synne is this: that, as seith Seint Peter: Whoso that dooth synne is thral of synne. And synne put a man in greet thraldom. And therfore seith the prophete Ezechiel: I wente sorweful in desdayn of myself. And certes, wel oghte a man have desdayn of synne, and withdrawe hym from that thraldom and vileynye. And lo, what seith Seneca in this matere. He seith thus: Though I wiste that neither God ne man

nesholde nevere knowe it, yet wolde I have desdayn for to do synne. And the same Seneca also seith: I am born to gretter thynges than to be thral to my body, or than for to maken of my body a thral. Ne a fouler thral may no man newoman maken of his body, than for to yeven his body to synne. Al were it the fouleste cherl, or the fouleste womman that lyveth, & leest of value, yet is he thanne moore foule and moore in servitude. Evere fro the hyer degree that man falleth, the moore is he thral, and moore to God & to the world vile and abhominable. O goode God! wel oghte man have desdayn of synne; sith that, thurgh synne, ther he was free, now is he made bonde. And therfore seith Seint Augustyn: If thou hast desdayn of thy servant, if he agilt or synne, have thou thanne desdayn that thou thyself sholdest do synne. Take reward of thy value, that thou ne be to foul to thyself. Allas! wel oghten they thanne have desdayn to been servants and thralles to synne, and soore been ashamed of hemself, that God of his endeles goodnesse hath set hem in heigh estaat, or yeven hem wit, strengthe of body, heele, beautee, prosperitee, and boghte hem fro the deeth with his herte blood, that they so unkyndely, agayns his gentillesse, quiten hym so vileynsly, to slaughtre of hir owene soules. O goode God! ye wommen that been of so greet beautee, remembreth yow of the proverbe of Salomon, that seith: He likneth a fair womman that is a fool of hire body, lyk to a ryng of gold that were in the groyn of a sough. for right as a sough wroteth in everich ordure, so wroteth she hire beautee in the stynkyng ordure of synne.

THE thridde cause that oghte moeve a man to contricioun, is drede of the day of doome, and of the horrible peynes of helle. for as Seint Jeromes seith: At every tyme that me remembreth of the day of doome, I quake; for whan I ete or drynke, or whatso that I do, evere semeth me that the trompe sowneth in myn ere: Rise up, ye that been dede, & cometh to the juggement. O goode God! muchel oghte a man to drede swich a juggement, Theras we shullen been alle, as Seint Poul seith, biforn the seete of oure Lord Ihesu Crist; wheras he shal make a general congregacioun, wheras no man may been absent. for certes, there availleth noon esoyne ne excusacioun. And nat onoly that oure defautes shullen be jugged, but eek that alle oure werkes shullen openly be knowe. And as seith Seint Bernard: Ther ne shal no pledyng availle, ne no sleighte; we shullen yeven rekenyng of everich ydel word. Ther shul we han a juge that may

nat been deceyved ne corrupt. And why? for certes, alle oure thoghtes been discovered as to hym; ne for preyere ne for meede he shal nat been corrupt. And therfore seith Salomon: The wratthe of God ne wol nat spare no wight, for preyere ne for yifte. And therfore, at the day of doom, ther nys noon hope to escape.

THERFORE, as seith Seint Anselm: ful greet angwyssh shul the synful folk have at that tyme. Ther shal the stierne & wrothe juge sitte above, and under hym the horrible put of helle open to destroyen hym that moot bi knowen his synnes, whiche synnes openly been shewed biforn God and biforn every creature. And on the left syde, mo devels than herte may bithynke, for to harye and drawe the synful soules to the peyne of helle. And withinne the hertes of folk shal be the bityng conscience, and withoute-forth shal be the world al brennyng. Whider shal thanne the wretched synful man flee to hiden hym? Certes, he may nat hyden hym; he mooste come forth & shewen hym. for certes, as seith Seint Jerome: The erthe shal casten hym out of hym, and the see also; and the eyr also, that shal be ful of thonder clappes and lightnynges.

OW soothly, whoso wel remembreth hym of these thynges, I gesse that his synne shal nat turne hym into delit, but to greet sorwe, for drede of the peyne of helle. And therfore seith Job to God: Suffre, Lord, that I may awhile biwaille, and wepe, er I go withoute returnyng to the derke lond, covered with the derknesse of deeth; to the lond of mysese and of derknesse, whereas is the shadwe of deeth; whereas ther is noon ordre or ordinaunce, but grisly drede that evere shal laste. Loo, heere may ye seen that Job preyde respite awhile, to biwepe and waille his trespas; for soothly, oo day of respite is better than al the tresor of the world. And forasmuche as a man may acquiten hymself biforn God by penitence in this world, & nat by tresor, therfore sholde he preye to God to yewe hym respite awhile, to biwepe and biwailen his trespas. for certes, al the sorwe that a man myghte make fro the bigynnyng of the world, nys but a litel thyng at regard of the sorwe of helle.

THE cause why that Job clepeth helle The lond of derknesse; understondeth that he clepeth it lond or erthe, for it is stable, and nevere shal faille; derk, for he that is in helle hath defaute of light material. for certes, the derke light, that shal come out of the fyr that evere shal brenne, shal turne hym al to peyne that is in helle; for it sheweth hym to the horrible